



Local Maintenance and Improvement Grants

There are some 20,000 miles of federal and state highways in Georgia – the interstate system and major roads that link our cities one to the other; carry our commuters to and from employment centers and give structure to our thriving logistics industry and interstate commerce.

There are another 100,000 or so miles of city streets and county roads – streets or rural routes we live on that carry us to the neighborhood grocery store, to church, dentists and doctors; that take our children to and from school and become veritable appendages of daily life.

The former are the responsibility of the Georgia Department of Transportation; the latter of their respective county or city governments. Both are hugely expensive to grow and maintain.

And while there's never enough money to go around, the Department historically has assisted local governments in funding their work.

Faced now with new legislative mandates and a stubborn economy that is stretching resources like never before, **Georgia DOT has developed a streamlined, user-friendly program to get grant monies to cities and counties faster and simpler than ever before.** The Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) program began two years ago as a consolidation of previous Department local assistance programs. New matching fund requirements resulting from the July Transportation Referendum vote prompted us to retool LMIG – to recast it so it best helps cities and counties help themselves.

We are in the process of providing the state's roughly 700 cities and counties information on the "new" LMIG program and Fiscal 2013 application packets. With approximately \$110 million at stake, we expect most cities and counties to apply. The grants will range from around a thousand dollars to four million, based on the population and number of miles of roadway in the city or county.

Georgia's General Assembly, in adopting The Transportation Investment Act (TIA) and its statewide sales tax referendum held this past July 31, stipulated that local governments in those districts of the state where the referendum was approved would have to provide a 10 percent local match to receive their LMIG grants; those in districts where it failed, a 30 percent match. Some wonder if that is fair to local governments, especially those where TIA failed.

It is; in reality, cities and counties always contributed to DOT assistance programs. For resurfacings, they always had to patch and prepare roadways before the state could put down new pavement. On new construction projects, local governments always were responsible for any preliminary engineering and needed right-of-way purchases and they always provided most of the project's funding. So there is no new burden.

Actually, local governments stand to benefit more than ever from a revitalized LMIG program: the \$110 million dedicated to LMIG this fiscal year is tens of millions more than in previous years and we'll now give local governments their total grants in up-front single payments, instead of as work is completed.

This will give them the flexibility to decide which projects to build and to begin work sooner. As it should be, cities and counties will control their funds, their schedules and their projects.

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